constructed in ancient times between India and Sri Lanka, have been verified by the satellites of NASA;

(b) whether it is also a fact that consequent upon construction of "Sethusamudram Project", which links India with Sri Lanka, existence of 30 km. long Sri Ram Setu of ancient times would be lost and would become a matter of history; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) and (b) There is no scientific evidence regarding the existence of any ancient man-made structure in the proposed Sethusamudram Ship Channel alignment.

(b) Does not arise.

Performance of serving bureaucrats

*417. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to get the performance of its serving bureaucrats evaluated by the faculty of foreign institutes like MIT, Harvard, Princeton and Yale;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the serving IAS personnel would also undergo refresher courses in such universities to finetune their skills in governance and decision making?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): (a) and (c) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

VPTs under Bharat Nirman Programme

†418. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Village Public Telephones (VPTs) are being installed in villages under Bharat Nirman Programme;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the target fixed in this regard; and

(c) the number of villages where Village Public Telephones have been installed till March, 2007?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) entered into an agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) in November, 2004 for provision of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in remaining 66,822 unconnected villages in the country. This excludes villages having population less than 100, lying in thick forest areas/naxalite infested areas etc. As on 31st March, 2007, out of 66,822 unconnected eligible villages, 46,969 villages have been provided with VPT facility and the remaining 19,853 villages will be provided with VPTs progressively by November, 2007.

Houses to poor under VAMBAY in Nagpur

†*419. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of economically weaker people of Nagpur who have been allotted houses so far under "Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana' (VAMBAY);

(b) whether it is a fact that there are people who have not so far been allotted houses under the said scheme;

(c) if so, the reasons for not allotting houses to such people; and

(d) by when people of very poor economic categories would be allotted houses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION (KUMARI SELJA): (a) As reported by the Nagpur Municipal Corporation, under the Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY) in Nagpur, construction of 2578 houses has been completed. Out of these, 1467 houses have been handed over to the beneficiaries and 1111 houses are under the process of allotment.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.